

FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: November 18, 2010

Agenda Item: Bighorn Sheep and Mountain Goat Transplants

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Final Approval

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 15 minutes

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Background

Trap and transplant of bighorn sheep and mountain goats is an effective management tool. The removal of sheep and/or goats assists population control and transplanted animals can ultimately represent new populations or augment existing populations. While trap and transplant efforts are not meant to replace hunter harvest, in some areas harvest is insufficient for local population control but cannot easily be increased. For example, hunters may target easily accessible subgroups of migratory sheep to potentially negative ends while helicopter netgunning can be considerably more selective and dispersed in capture efforts.

For this winter (likely January 2011), Wild Horse Island in FWP Region 1 has been identified as a bighorn sheep source population. A new release site tentatively identified in north of Columbia Falls has been removed from further consideration due to the close proximity of domestic sheep. Bighorn sheep from Wild Horse Island will be released on Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes lands in FWP Region 1.

Additionally, 10-20 mountain goats from HD 313 in January 2011 are slated for capture and transplant to be split between an augmentation in the Cube Iron/Mount Headley area of FWP Region 1 and a new release into historic mountain goat habitat in the Whitefish Range also in Region 1.

Public Involvement Process & Results

Recent comments from the public and FWP Commission have made it clear that many value ewe harvest above out-of-state releases. Comments have also resulted in in-state releases prioritized in the recently adopted [Montana Bighorn Sheep Conservation Strategy](#). While augmentations of existing populations may take place without further public review or process from the FWP Commission endorsement in June 2010, the proposed new release of mountain goats into historically occupied habitat in the Whitefish Range was addressed with an EA and associated public comment period from Oct. 19 through Nov. 3. That Decision Notice will be available for the Nov. 18 Commission meeting.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends final approval of these proposed transplants for winter 2011 (likely January). They represent an effective management tool for population control and for the thoughtful expansion of wildlife resources and the associated public opportunities.

Proposed Motion

I move the FWP Commission approve as Final these augmentations and new release as presented by FWP.